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# THE TORQUE•TUBE

THE NEWS PUBLICATION FOR MEMBERS

OF THE 1937-1938 BUICK CLUB • FOUNDED 1980



**Volume X • Number 4**



# THE TORQUE·TUBE

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Volume X; Number 4

January 1992

William E. Olson, Editor • 842 Mission Hills Lane, Columbus, Ohio 43235



## *Miscellaneous Matter*



### **EASTERN CLUB MEET - DON'T FORGET**

Our Eastern Meet will be held in Flint on May 29-30 with a visit to Crossroads Village on Saturday, May 30. Please mark your calendars. As of this writing, organizers Marv Rhynard and Bob Jones are still working on a motel deal for us, but Crossroads Village has been reserved. More details in the next issue.

### **EASTERN CLUB TOUR, MAY 31 - JUNE 2**

A tentative itinerary for the Eastern Club Tour, to be held immediately following the Flint Meet, appears below. Dan McLaughlin (#466) has planned three days of fun and adventure in beautiful and interesting northern Michigan, and the weather in early June should be perfect for such an event. (No overheating!) I expect to be continuing on, after the conclusion of the Tour, through Michigan's Upper Peninsula and into Minnesota to enjoy the scenery and collect some valuable artifacts (i.e. '37 Roadmaster hoods) that I have been trying to figure out how to take possession of for several months. Therefore, instead of the '37 I will bring my truck, which will be equipped with a tow bar, tools and odd parts. We will thus have emergency break-down assistance available through the end of the Tour on June 2. The Perry Hotel in Petoskey has reserved a block of standard rooms for us — cost is \$64 per night, single or double (there are also more expensive rooms with better views, etc.). These rooms will be held until April 30. After that, you may be out of luck, as this is a popular vacation place, so make reservations early.

Call the Perry Hotel at 616/347-4000 and identify yourself as a Club member. Why not do it right now? (A deposit of one night's charge will be required.)

If you plan to participate in the Tour, please also call or write Dan McLaughlin, 6608 Forty Mile Point, Rogers City, Michigan 49779. 517/734-3312 or 517/734-3184.

• **FOUNDED BY DAVE LEWIS IN 1980** •





# COVERS



Andrew Diem (#852) accompanied some fellow-members of the BCA Metro Chapter (Washington, D.C.) on a tour to the "Pennsylvania Dutch" country around Lancaster, PA last autumn. Here's his 1937 40-C coming across a venerable iron bridge. The bridge appears to be a simple Pratt truss, a style of crossing duplicated on thousands of rural highways in the 19th Century and well into the 20th; some modern reinforcing has been added.

Paul Culp's (#508) 1938 Century posed in a snowy setting: Twin Oaks Road, Bedminster Township, Bucks County, Pennsylvania in the winter of 1988. Son Paul III is no fool; he's staying inside the car where it's reasonably warm while Daddy takes the pictures.

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## MAY 31, 1991

- 9:00 a.m. Leave Flint on I-75 north.
- 12:00 m. Arrive Grayling. Eat lunch at \_\_\_\_\_.
- 1:00 p.m. Drive north on I-75 to M-93. Exit east.  
Drive to Hartwick Pines State Park. This is the last stand of virgin pine in Michigan. Visit displays and make walking tour of park.
- 2:30 p.m. Leave Hartwick Pines west on M-93 and return to I-75. Turn north. Drive to Gaylord and turn west on M-32 to US 131. Turn north to Petoskey and to the Perry Hotel.
- 6:30 p.m. Dinner on your own.
- 8:00 p.m. Informal meeting in the hotel lounge.  
till ???

## JUNE 1, 1991

- 9:30 a.m. Assemble in hotel parking lot. Drive in caravan to US 31 through Bay View and turn left on M-131. This intersection is just beyond Bay View. Follow M-131 north through Harbor Springs, Devil's Elbow, Middle Village, and Good Hart to Cross Village. Follow lead car on side trip to beach for photo opportunities. After a brief stop we'll continue north from Cross Village on Shore Drive to Lakeview Road and turn right, to Gill Road and turn left, to Cecil Bay Road and turn left, turn right on Wilderness Park Road to Mackinaw City.
- 12:00 m. Lunch at \_\_\_\_\_, Mackinaw City.
- 1:00 p.m. At this point you have three choices:
  - + visit Fort Michilmackinac in Mackinaw City, (Price \_\_\_\_\_).

- + visit Mackinac Island (no cars permitted).  
Board ferry at dock Mackinaw City. (Price \_\_\_\_)
  - + visit Mill Creek State Park, (Price \_\_\_\_)  
3 miles east of Mackinaw City on US 23. If you  
want this option assemble at Fort Michilmackinac  
parking lot and drive in caravan to park.
- 6:00 p.m. Assemble at Fort Michilmackinac parking lot. Drive  
in caravan on US 31 south through Carp Lake,  
Levering, Pellston, Brutus, Alanson, Oden, Conway,  
and Bay View to Petoskey and the Perry Hotel.
- 6:45 p.m. Dinner on your own.
- 8:00 p.m. Informal meeting in the lounge at the Perry Hotel.  
till ???

#### JUNE 2, 1991

- 9:00 a.m. Assemble in parking lot and drive east on US-31  
approximately one mile to the intersection of US-  
131. Continue straight ahead on US-131 six miles to  
the intersection of M-75, at the blinker light.  
Turn right onto M-75, drive through the village of  
Walloon Lake to Boyne City, about six miles. Leave  
Boyne City on the southwest on Ferry Road. After  
eight miles you will arrive at the Ironton Ferry.  
(Fare \$1.50)
- Inasmuch as the ferry's capacity is four cars, the  
first cars across should wait at side of the road  
for the others. When all have crossed continue  
through Ironton to M-66 and turn right, continuing  
the five miles into Charlevoix.
- 11:30 a.m. Park at \_\_\_\_\_ where we will eat lunch, ordering  
from the menu.
- 12:15 p.m. Walk to dock and board boat for cruise on Lake  
Charlevoix. (Fare \$17.00)
- 2:30 p.m. At Charlevoix. Drive in caravan on US 31 north to  
Petoskey.
- 3:30 p.m. Free time. Shop the Gaslight District or visit the  
Petoskey Historical Museum, which is the old Pere  
Marquette Depot. Both are walking distance from the  
hotel. Or use this time for whatever purpose you  
prefer.
- 6:30 p.m. Dinner in the private dining room at the Perry  
till??? Hotel.  
After our meal we will enjoy conversation among good  
friends.

#### JUNE 3, 1991

- 8:00 a.m. Goodbye. Depart for home. Hope you had a good  
till??? time.

### BACK ISSUES - PLEASE NOTE

All Vol. IX issues (Sept. 1990 - Aug. 1991) have been shipped to Back Issue Master Paul B. Culp, Jr. (#508). In addition, Paul has copies of some earlier issues. In consideration of his taking these off my hands (thus allowing me to clear a path through the basement to the washer and the furnace so I can have clean socks and my wife can change the furnace filter without yelling at me) Paul gets to keep the money from their sale. Please contact Paul for availability and price, and pay him directly.

Paul B. Culp, Jr. (#508)  
RR4  
Box 411, Elephant Rd.  
Perkasie, PA 18944  
215/249-3166

Please do not ask me for copies of specific articles from past issues.

If you do, I will ignore you. I once did this, but it took too damn much time and usually ended up costing me money, and it distracted my attention from the more important pursuit of getting this publication out reasonably on time. So, I regret I cannot do it any more. Member Charles Jekofsky (#524) has, I believe, a substantially complete set of Torque Tube issues in photocopied form. If you want copies of a few specific articles or copies of the indices (that's the plural of "index," folks, go look it up) for past volumes so you can see what may have been written about in the past, contact Charles: he may be able to help you out. (Don't ask him to copy the whole damn thing.)

Charles Jekofsky (#524)  
6307 North Capitol St.  
Washington, D.C. 20011-1409  
202/829-0471





## A SAD STORY

By Bill Mack (#839)

Recently my wife and I were returning from Connecticut and stopped at a small body shop. I had previously seen what looked like an Old Buick from the road. The owner was obliging and let us look at the car. It is, as you can see, a '37 Roadmaster four-door. He claimed that it had been restored before and that he planned to do it again this winter. The head was off and the pistons were frozen in their bores. The interior was in rough shape. The man, in his mid 70s, was confident that he could get the car running and restored. I doubt that our conceptions of restoration coincide. The car was not for sale.

The hulk is a '38 Century two-door sedan, model 68 if I read the tag correctly. Many of the parts behind the car appeared to be usable and I asked to purchase the trunk emblem. Not for sale I was told, the man's son was going to rebuild it. I can only assume that it would be a hot rod as the engine is long gone.

I wished the owner well and we took our leave. I don't believe that the present owner will ever do anything with these autos. They will most likely continue their return to earth.

EDITOR'S NOTE. The body shop owner Bill Mack encountered is, unfortunately, typical of a breed of selfish, ignorant, and mean-spirited old bastards that refuse to part with antique cars they will never do anything with, or play games with people who could do something with them. If you came back five or six times, and finally offered the guy \$5,000 for the Roadmaster, he'd probably ask \$50,000 — if he didn't still refuse to sell. Maybe he truly believes he will "restore" the car in one winter, or maybe he's waiting for the Domino's Pizza Man to come around and offer him two or three million. Either way, his brain is stuck in "Low." I have nothing good to say about such people. Doubtless the Roadmaster and the remains of the Century will end up as scrap or, as Bill Mack puts it, return to earth.





*Two more shots of Andrew Diem's four-door convertible in the "Pennsylvania Dutch" country: at the steam-powered Strasburg Railroad and rolling through an old covered wooden bridge.*





## ==== C'est encore le Buick! ====

There's nothing like throwing around a few foreign words and phrases to lend a certain *je ne sais quoi* to a publication -- *nicht wahr?* Besides, it makes the Editor look extremely learned. (Or a buffoon if he gets the meaning wrong, but -- *chacun a son gout* -- either effect is good.) *Ergo*, to introduce the following pieces in which reminiscence is summoned up and examined, I have resurrected one of my favorite phrases, the title in French of Marcel Proust's monumental novel in seven parts, *Remembrance of Things Past*:

❧ *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu ...* ❧

# The Red Badge

BY THE EDITOR

Most people when composing a story such as this, talk about their cars, or how they bought the cars, or what they did to the cars after they bought them. These stories are frequently entertaining to read — sometimes even, shall we say, inspirational — and to each author his or her own story is unique and interesting. (Funny, though, how the authors always leave out what is to me one of the most interesting parts: what did the guy *pay*?) You've already heard a good deal about all of that from me, however, and what fascinates me more than anything else is how people get involved in "old cars" in the first place, and why many of them gravitate to certain "eras": for example, why am I one of only a very few late '30s owners in the BCA Central Ohio Chapter?

Perhaps the whole business may be very Freudian. In any event, I suppose the psychologist could undertake to explain many persons' hobbies in psychological terms. Faced with a world seemingly complex and very largely beyond his personal control, the collector seeks to order and control a tiny facet of it by, say, aggregating a collection of all the postage stamps of Persia or all the baseball cards of St. Louis Cardinals. (Such collectors, however, frequently find no real relief, for the undertaking brings its own frustrations: there is always one piece — and often many — that eludes all but the most determined and wealthy pursuer.) Many old-car owners have told me that they bought — or are looking for — particular cars because those cars recall some significant event or period in their lives. How often have we heard something like this: "Yeah, I had a '57 convertible when I was dating my wife, but when we got married I had to sell it"? Thus are happy times recalled: a fellow quite plainly in his 50s drives around Lancaster, Ohio in a red '60 Chevrolet convertible, lowered and with "Rock 'N' Roll" painted on its "continental kit". This guy seems like a buffoon to me until I decide that maybe he is re-living his youth, or at least trying to, and that it is quite possible he was a good deal more happy and carefree then, driving his *first* '60 Chevy, than he is now. But the converse may also be the case. "When I was in college, I wanted a '51 Merc so much I could taste it, but I didn't have the money." Now he does, and the past is not recaptured, but recreated. Of course, human behavior is a lot more complex than such a simple analysis would suggest, and unless we believe in reincarnation we

cannot conclude that the 40-year-old with a "brass-era" car is trying to re-live his youth. However, I suspect that there is some element of fantasy and romance in it for all of us. But there is nothing wrong with fantasies unless we disappear into them entirely.

\* \* \* \* \*

Can I thus explain myself? Perhaps, even though it may well not be a good idea to try. But in truth I seem to have been interested in "old cars" from about the age of 11 or 12. I can still remember the afternoon in 1946 when I decided for the first time to inspect a group of automobiles parked at our local railroad station to find out what they were. Of course, there were lots of pre-war cars around then — in fact, almost all of them were pre-war — and a mid-'30s car was nothing very unusual. The first to be so inspected was a tan-and-brown Auburn, the next a big black car with a red "Buick 8" badge on its grille (must have been a '37!), and the next — believe it or not — a "sharknose" Graham.

I soon found that some cars were considerably more impressive than others. Most impressive in my then-limited world were the 1930's limos used by the taxi company that operated out of the railroad station: two Packards, a Pierce-Arrow, a Lincoln "K" Brunn town car, and a Buick Limited. (Buick kept good company there.) They were doubtless then one or two owners removed from original purchase, and a bit shabby around the edges; nevertheless, these vehicles were, in my 11-year-old eyes, magnificent, and only a shade below the steam locomotive in the hierarchy of mankind's creations. What would it be like to drive them? Surely, a magnificent subject for fantasy. One dreadful day, the Lincoln caught fire and burned to a blackened hulk. I was devastated.





I retrieved a piece of the wreckage — I believe the remains of a sun visor — as a memento mori and kept it for several years. These childhood experiences, Dr. Freud, doubtless set the stage for what was to happen many years later.

As I passed into the awkward years of adolescence, I also found that cars had some significant advantages over girls: they could be inspected closely without rudeness, and one did not need to dance well or make witty conversation with them. I thought a Buick would well-suit my image of our household. I pestered my father to buy one — it seemed to me he could easily afford it — but he refused, and, eventually exasperated by my yakking, said he wished to hear no more about cars. (In retrospect, it appears that, as a salesman reimbursed on a mileage basis for using his own car, the Old Man had sound economics in mind; moreover, unlike many today, he did not want to give people the impression that he "had money." A Pontiac or Dodge was his limit.)

At age 17, I was all set to get a 1930s car for myself — a Ford convertible, as I recall it. There were then (1952) thousands of them, and a quite decent one was \$150, maybe \$200. Father vetoed that idea, too. It was doubtless a good thing he did: at the rate high-school-age boys in the early 1950s were wrecking 1930s cars, it is a certifiable wonder that there are any left at all.

The ensuing three decades (1952-1982) may be passed over quickly. They were taken up with education, military service, starting a career, getting married, having children, buying a house, and being more-or-less continually broke. Antique cars could now and then be admired from afar, but having one was the most ephemeral of dreams. In any event, when we lived in New Jersey (1965-1980) we had a garage that would hold either (a) one Chevrolet, or (b) everything else one normally keeps in a garage, but not both.

In 1980, we moved to Ohio in a corporate relocation. As typically happens in such events, my wife and I looked at 20 or so houses in a week, and after that was over I couldn't have told you anything about any of them, except that we'd bought one. When we actually got here, I was astonished to find that we'd bought a house with a four-car garage. (The former owner, I found out later, had a Corvette, a street rod, and a camping trailer, and had extended the garage to hold all this stuff.) Although I did not realize it then, the course of events was moving inexorably toward a sea change in my life.

Only one additional event — a curious and seemingly-random one — remained. This had nothing whatever to do with antique cars, but it was an essential part of the story. Traditional in the subdivision into which we had moved was — and is — a Fourth of July parade; traditional also, I found, was — and is — the construction by most of my neighbors of a float for the parade. To give the neighbors their due, I will say that these floats have been, by and large, amazingly elaborate and ingenious structures. I never got terribly interested in this, and made various excuses not to participate. In 1983, however, I was prevailed upon to impersonate Uncle Sam on such a float. I could not let them down, my neighbors cried: no other male on the block would fit into the costume. (I was a tad slimmer then.) Moreover, I had to perform on the float, not just stand and look dignified. This awful tableau was witnessed by three senior executives of my employer, all of whom recognized me. My dignity and status as assistant general counsel of a major electric utility system were shattered, and thereafter, until I escaped from headquarters, I was known in the Executive Area as "Uncle Sam."

I schemed long on how gracefully to get out of all future parades, and avoid further mortifications. It then occurred to me that some people drove antique cars in the parade. I had always wanted one. That was the solution! Obviously, if I had to drive my car in the parade — a dignified appearance, surely — I could not be in the float. I could not work on making the float, either, because I'd be working on the car. I now had a garage into which it would fit. There remained only two things: (a) the car; and (b)





the money. Having recently been ushered into Bank One's new "Executive Banking" program, (b) was no problem — if one doesn't consider biting into a line of credit as a problem.

All sorts of thoughts spun in my brain, but they kept coming back to the great 1930s cars of my youth, to the cars my father would not buy, to the majesty of those railroad station taxis. 1937, 1938, 1939, maybe 1940: those were the years of real "style", before headlights were swallowed into fenders and running boards disappeared, when a Packard was a Packard, and a Buick was really a Buick, and a Studebaker President was a damn nice car, not a rocket ship. On the practical side, late '30s cars eliminated vacuum tanks (which I will never understand) and mechanical brakes (except for Fords, which may be fun but have no dignity.)

In November 1983, the Sunday Columbus Dispatch revealed a 1937 Buick Special at what seemed an eminently affordable price. I went and looked. It did not seem too bad and it ran OK. And there on the grille was that Red Badge: "Buick 8." And yet more: under the hood was "BUICK Valve-in-head silent oil-cushioned EIGHT." I was 11 years old again! I did not even dicker on the price. A late 30's Buick was it! Dignified, conservative, powerful, a "prestige" make, distinctive. My dear wife was — temporarily — appalled.

After some time, I discovered that there was a good deal more wrong with the Special than I'd thought, and that, at the rate I was going, it would be 2002 before half of it was fixed. I sold the Special (an immensely educational and entertaining experience,

related in Vol. IX, No. 8), and bought my '37 Roadmaster in Wyoming. If a Special is dignified and prestigious, a Roadmaster is double! Moreover, the Roadmaster appeared to need only a few minor tweakings to be completely finished. Well, friends, that was wrong, too — see Volume IX, No. 9. Among other things, I've had to (1) replace the clutch, the whole rear end and half the brakes, and (2) tear the whole engine down to its smallest part, the first "rebuilder" having written the book on "amateur" restoration. All of this to get out of a once-a-year parade?

To play on the title of a novel of the Civil War, I might have called this story "The Red Badge of Folly." Is this Folly? With two sons in college, should I be stuffing hundred-dollar bills into the voracious mouth of this 55-year-old money eater? Wouldn't I be better off just puttering around the yard or refinishing the furniture? Is the Red Badge a Mockery? Too much fantasy?

NO. In truth, friends, the "Buick 8" is the Red Badge of Accomplishment and Satisfaction. I have learned a lot, more than I thought possible, and I have the satisfaction, not only of participating in the preservation of a beautiful machine, but also of bringing, if you will, the past back to life in a new way. Now I am not the wide-eyed 11-year-old boy on the sidewalk, I am actually on the road, behind the wheel. I can't see the front of many modern cars from the driver's seat, but I sure can see the hood of my '37, and the Red Badge precedes it as the engine pulls smoothly uphill in high.



*In case you haven't guessed, the photos accompanying this article show the Editor's '37 Roadmaster sedan.*



What would it be like to drive those great cars at the railroad station? Now I know. "Buick 8" is also the Red Badge of Romance. Fantasy becomes, for a little while at least, reality, and the past is recaptured, recreated, and rolled into the present. My dear wife might presume to doubt it, but I am an incurable romantic at heart. So, I suspect, are we all.

\* \* \* \* \*

A final note. Everybody asks about my vanity plate: FREYA. That could also be a story, but for now: in Old Norse mythology, "Freya" was the Goddess of Beauty and Love. Is the car Beautiful? Do I Love Her? Is that Romantic?

I've left out the prices, too, as all the story-tellers do. Some things are better left unsaid, yes, even un-thought-about, and surely money ought not to be mentioned in the same breath as romance. Besides, I would not want to end this story with a fib.



## .....SOME THINGS YOU JUST NEVER LEARN!

By Dug Waggoner #10

It was the summer of 1944. WWII was a way of life for most civilians in one way or another as well as in the military. My recollection of automobiles at the time was that nobody in our acquaintance had a new one. And if you did see a new car or one that had clean whitewalls the occupants were considered suspicious or wealthy. Our big 1938 Buick fit the status quo like an old glove.

Both of my folks worked for the government war effort at a major Army Air Corps supply and repair base. Dad wore dark green pants and matching long sleeve shirts with a black leather bow tie for a uniform. The large name badge he wore, with his photograph, identified him as a crew chief. His responsibility, during the shift, was to inspect all the hydraulic motors and switches either by bench testing them or crawling all over the aircraft. Most of the aircraft consisted of B26 bombers. Mom did her part working in the office of public relations for the base and in her spare time rolled and wrapped bandages for the Red Cross. We all saved large balls of "tin foil" and newspapers and tin cans were always underfoot (everything old is new again or haven't you been recycling).

During the day, at least in the summertime when my sister and I were on vacation from school, we were kept busy at what we now call "day care". It was a low cost child care center for the parents who worked at the base. I can hear it now...four or five young



boys sitting around a table full of crayons, pencils and plenty of paper drawing "dog fights" between the Messerschmitt and the U.S. Air Corps' P51's (even my favorite the P38). Our exuberance in applying a colorful amount of crayon was matched by the sound effects of fighter planes diving from the clouds and attacking the enemy aircraft on the drawing paper before us. Even to the point of attacking the aircraft on the drawing paper next to us. The woman supervisor would inevitably have to calm us down from "our war games," when we got too raucous and our imaginary bombs and bullets had to be scrubbed off the table. (God, I wish I still had some of those drawings today).

On other occasions, during free time, I'd wonder over to the athletic field at the center. The normal use of the center over the remainder of the year was that of the local high school campus and also the local training center for ROTC and Army Reserve units. At seven years old I liked to watch the young recruits test their physical prowess at running, jumping and crawling over and under various contraptions.

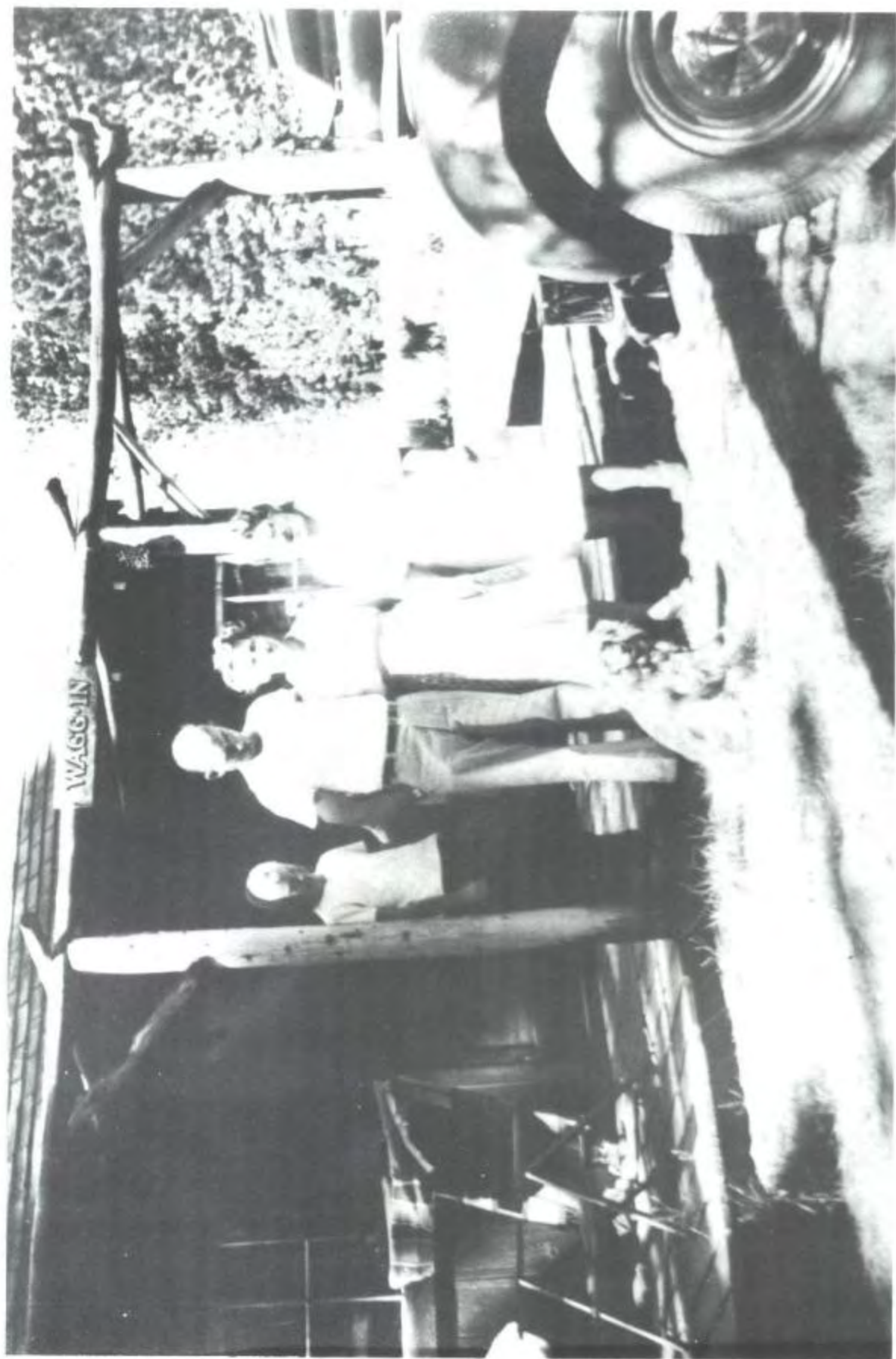
My favorite exercise had recruits run, jump out and catch a rope that was suspended from an overhead scaffold. The trick was to time your jump and catch the rope that was still swinging from the last lucky recruit and continue swinging to the other side of a wide pool of muddy water. The drill sergeant would instruct each recruit, using words I didn't understand at the time, to put as much enthusiasm into that jump as he would himself. And tell others that his mother could jump better than they could. But sooner or later someone would mis-judge his timing and bare the brunt of a fiery tongue lashing from the sergeant as well as a razzing from the rest of the company. Eventually you couldn't tell the jocks from the non-athletes because the jocks were soaked with perspiration and the others were just wet and muddy.

When they were done for the day I would take my place at the running track in front of that muddy puddle. My courageous little legs would carry me to the edge but my mind would carry me over the water to the silent cheers of all.

Around five o'clock my folks would roll up to the center, to retrieve us, on their way home. Even though we only lived a mile away it was too hot and dusty for us to walk. We couldn't wait to get into the yard and under those big cottonwood shade trees around the house.

Earlier in the year Dad managed to pick up a 1938 Buick Special four door sedan (41?). From what I know now it must have been repainted. The dull brown was too dark (like coffee with just a dab of cream. Some lighter brown color was showing through here and there). The engine was red with FIREBALL EIGHT on the valve cover and I don't remember a spark plug cover. The radiator cap consisted of a jar lid that Dad continually had to wire on when ever he checked the water. And I can remember on one occasion when moms' rayon stocking was used to replace the fan belt. The blackwall tires (if you could buy them) never matched and for a while the passenger side windshield had a neat little impact image of my forehead (but that's another anecdote).

Everyone has stories of someone getting a finger or worse slammed in a door or trunk lid by someone not watching the little people. Children have a way of being in the wrong place .....etc. I've got a different slant on the subject. My Dad was a smoker at the time and I always liked to watch the cigarette lighter pop out like magic when it was ready. I could never figure out how that little lighter got so hot.

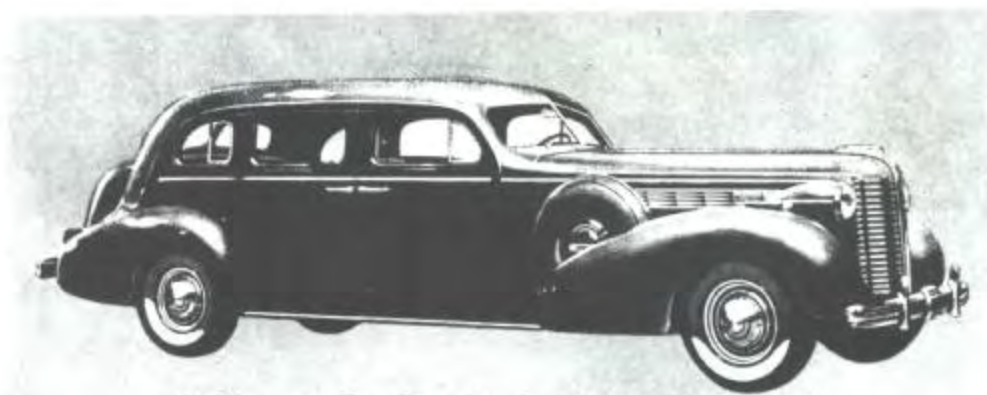




One bright day while everyone was off doing chores and such I decided it was time to find out. As I sat on the front floor mat, so nobody could see me, I poked in the lighter. It wasn't but a minute later when it popped out to it's normal resting position. I pulled it out of the socket and sat there looking at the coiled end and wondered if it had really been long enough to get hot. The sun was coming in the window and I couldn't tell if this piece of metal in my little fingers was glowing or not, let alone light a cigarette. As the seconds rolled by I looked for something to test the merits of the lighter. But it was my left thumb that became the owner of the interesting swirl pattern that smelled like burned chicken feathers and quickly brought on a week long pain and the wrath of my parents. I can't remember which hurt more, my little thumb or my little butt.

We were fortunate to acquire the rental rights to a forestry tract cabin site in the mountains by way of the former owner losing those rights in a not so friendly card game. The photograph shows my folks and I the family dog "Snuffy" and a neighbor. And just to right you can see the front end of our '38 Buick. That car had a lot of memories as well as some interesting finger prints.

Now that I have my own '38 Buick (44), and on the down hill side of a full frame off restoration, maybe I will figure out how that cigarette lighter works without using the old thumb test.



*Six-Passenger Four-Door Touring Sedan with trunk back*  
MODEL 91





Al Anderson's (#723) 1937 Century coupe is shown with two U. S. aircraft from World War II. The P-40A Warhawk is finished in the "sharkmouth" scheme with Chinese insignia used by the legendary "Flying Tigers" of the American Volunteer Group in China circa 1941-2. The four-engine B-17F Flying Fortress appears as one might have at a base in England in 1944. These appealing pictures were taken on the Anderson's way to the BCA National Meet at Batavia, New York in 1989. (There is a collection of World War II-era aircraft somewhere in western New York, but I forget exactly where it is.)





# TECHNICAL TIPS



## SHOCK ABSORBERS

Several people have asked recently about rebuilding lever-action shock absorbers. This is the firm used by Dave Lewis:

The Shock Exchange  
2317 North 15th St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19132  
215/229-3200

Originally, there were different calibrations for each series. The front shocks for series 40 and 60, and series 80 and 90, and the rear shocks for '37 all series, were the same, but the shocks were set up slightly differently internally to accommodate the size and weight of each series. It is doubtful that The Shock Exchange or any other firm can duplicate these calibration differences today, and we must be satisfied with shocks that work reasonably well and do not leak.

With lever-action shocks, even a slight leak is a major problem, because the action of the shock will pump out all the fluid in as little as 50 miles of driving. Some members have filled leaking shocks with Spectro No. 10 motorcycle fork oil and in some cases this stuff, which apparently has a swelling agent in it, may cause enough swelling of the seals to cure minor leakage. I have not used it myself and cannot verify these reports, but the product seems certainly to be worth a try, at least as a temporary cure — it beats taking the whole front end apart if it works.

Years ago, a special Delco shock absorber fluid was sold by dealers and United Motors Service outlets. This was probably stocked and sold into the 1960s — I have a quart of it in a soft plastic container, and I don't think plastic containers were used earlier. However, it is not obtainable today. So, what to use for refilling or topping up shocks that don't have a significant leakage problem? The answer is: hydraulic jack oil. Prompted by a recent note in Cars & Parts by Matt Joseph, I looked at a can of hydraulic jack oil on the shelf of a local auto parts store. Sure enough, as usual Matt was right: in big letters it said "Hydraulic Jack Oil" and down below, in fine print: "for refillable shock absorbers." I would not use ATF, power steering fluid, or brake fluid, especially in an old shock, but probably not in a newly-rebuilt one either. People who have used ATF or power steering fluid have had the same problems as those who have used silicone brake fluid. All these fluids are designed for modern automotive components, and they will, over time, destroy rubber parts not specifically manufactured to be compatible with them. (Spectro may have the same effect, and that is why I suggest its use only conditionally. It may get you through a summer until you can have your shocks rebuilt, or it may get you through for years. At this point, I do not have enough information to judge its long-term effectiveness.)



## SILICONE BRAKE FLUID

This seems like an appropriate time to repeat what I said a few years ago. Several years back, silicone brake fluid (DOT No. 5) was being hailed as a godsend for antique car owners. Now, I do not recommend it to anybody. The problem with regular (DOT No. 3) glycol brake fluid is that it has a terrific affinity for water, and even when new is mildly corrosive, as you know if you have spilled any on paint and not cleaned it up right away. In cars used only infrequently, and sometimes stored for months in locations where some dampness is inevitably present (i.e. an unheated garage), glycol fluid can gum up and corrode, and like "permanent anti-freeze" its corrosiveness seems to increase with time. Silicone fluid does not absorb water and is not corrosive, qualities which led antique car people, when they first heard about it, to hail it as the answer to a maiden's prayer. The passage of time, however, has shown that silicone fluid is not compatible with ordinary rubber, but only with modern rubber compounds made to military specifications. Over time, silicone fluid will cause ordinary old-style automotive rubber to swell and eventually rot. Some modern wheel cylinders, repair kits, and hoses that will fit our cars may be compatible with silicone fluid, but we really don't know for sure, and it is now abundantly clear that NOS components from decades ago are not.

What every antique car owner ought to do, but probably won't, is purge his brake system once a year and add all new fluid. Some foreign car manufacturers (e.g. VW-Audi) recommend doing this every two years even for new cars in daily use.

## TORQUE BALL BUSHING REPAIR

By Gene McCoy (#573)

The universal joint torque ball bushing (Group no. 5.566, part no. 1301607) for '37 and '38 60, 80 and 90 series can be machined from Boston Gear part M2330-24. Boston Gear Company, 14 Hayward St., Quincy, MA 02171; 617/328-3300 or 800/343-5690 for location of nearest distributor. The inside diameter of the Boston Gear bushing is 1.4375 or .0275 smaller than our original, and the outside diameter is .026 larger than our original. The necessary modification can be easily made by any capable machine shop.

The oil grooves in the original can be copied with a Dremel or similar hand tool. A pattern can be made by lining the inside of the original bushing with wide masking tape and marking the grooves in the tape with a pen or marker. Remove the tape in one piece and transfer to the new bushing. Cutting the tape on the marks with a razor blade will give you a guide for locating the grooves. Depth is not critical; as with hand grenades, close counts.

## STOP LIGHT SWITCHES

By Gene McCoy (#573)

The stop light switch for a '57-'64 Ford Falcon 6-cylinder fits all '37 and '38 Buicks and is readily available. KEM #EG-1043; EIS #K-971; Bendix #8005; Delco #D-4766; Wagner #FC-6870; United (NAPA) #7715; Thermoid #SL-7715. The original switch has two screws for connections; the new can be soldered connections or the new-type bullet connectors can be added to your wires.



EDITOR'S NOTE. Almost any stop light switch that is designed for mounting in a brake line fitting with 1/8" pipe thread will work. A better choice may be Standard Ignition Products SLS-24 or counterpart; this has two screws as the original and does not require any modification of the wires. Switches that are operated mechanically off the brake pedal or designed for cars with cruise control are not suitable.



## QUESTIONS



During the past year I received several questions about oil pressure, or motor oil generally. This is an expanded version of the answers I gave.

Oil pressure. Some people were concerned that with hot oil, their gages were showing about 35 psi at running speeds, rather than the 45 psi the manuals specify. I think this is nothing to be concerned over, provided you have about 10 psi at hot idle. It may be a function of modern oils, which seem to thin out a bit more when warmed. Some people have gotten a bit more pressure by using SAE 40 or even non-detergent SAE 30 oil in warm weather. I am still experimenting with this. If your oil pressure drops below 10 at idle but goes up to 30 or so at running speed, it is likely your oil pump is leaking. The cover plate on the original pumps is die-cast zinc alloy, and tends to warp, or even to crack. If the cover does not mate perfectly with the pump body, the pump will leak. The cure is to have the cover plate and pump body mating surfaces machined absolutely flat. If the cover plate is cracked, look for another one; they are virtually impossible to weld, and I would not trust epoxy. This condition should be treated promptly. Another possible source of leakage is excessive wear to the relief valve piston. This requires making up a new piston, which is relatively simple machine work. There is a later-year cover plate repair kit, which consists of a steel cover plate and die-cast inlet. This makes a more trouble-free installation, and will fit all '37 and '38 pumps. Group No. 1-723, Part No. 1393176; look for this at swap meets. (Other causes of low oil pressure are, of course, excessively worn bearings and the like, but the oil pump is the likely culprit.)

Motor oil. What should I use? Here there are perhaps as many strongly-held views as people to hold such views, and it seems that every self-styled expert will tell you what you must absolutely do to avert disaster. Don't use detergent oil; use it. Never use multi-grade oil; use it. Use only Pennsylvania oil, e.g. Quaker State; Quaker State is useful only as weed-killer. Use additives; avoid them. On and on this goes. Here are my opinions, for what they are worth; they are no more than that, but they are based upon some measure of reflection and study, which is more than may be said of many opinions.

In the end, you must make a choice for yourself, to suit your own preferences and conditions, and, as with many things, this will probably involve some measure of compromise. There is no one "right" answer to the question.

Service and viscosity designations. Let us start with a few fundamentals. Every container of oil you buy will have an API (American Petroleum Institute) service designation on it. These range from "SB" through the alphabet to "SG", but it is unlikely you will see "SC" through "SE" today. (There are also "C" designations, typically "CC",

"CD" and "CDII". It is often said that the "S" stands for "spark" ignition (i.e. gasoline-fueled) and the "C" for "compression" ignition (i.e. diesel). They really don't mean that, but it is a handy rule of thumb and in any event need not concern us here.) "B" means light-to-medium duty; "G" means super-severe-duty; the intervening letters obviously mean various grades in between. ("SC" is for service typical of passenger car engines 1964-67; "SD" 1968-70; "SE" 1971-80.)

The number on a container of oil (e.g. SAE 30) is that oil's viscosity index. Viscosity describes an oil's resistance to flow, based upon standard tests established by the Society of Automotive Engineers. This is an important characteristic, and the appropriate viscosity is dependent upon the condition and pattern of use of the engine and the climatic conditions in which it is operated; however, most engines can successfully use a range of viscosities without major difficulty. The lower the number, the less resistance to flow. Thus, we might describe a 10W oil as "thin", or having a relatively high rate of flow, and a 40 as a "thicker" oil with a slower flow rate. ("Light," "heavy," and "weight" are often used in an offhand way — e.g., "20-weight" or "30 weight" oil — but the numbers have nothing to do with actual weight in ounces or pounds.)

It may be observed that the viscosity of many liquids is affected by temperature, and oil is no exception. Thus when heated any motor oil will flow more readily, and when cooled less readily. Viscosity index numbers not followed by "W" refer to a test performed at 212 degrees F. and indicate the relative viscosity of the oils at that temperature. "W" oils are tested at zero degrees F. (Where an oil is marked 20W-20, this does not mean that it has the same resistance to flow at 212 degrees as at zero degrees, but rather that it is more adaptable to colder temperatures than an oil marked only 20, and has been tested at both temperatures.) Motor oil must have a low enough viscosity to be pumped to all parts of the engine through fine clearances, and a high enough viscosity to provide adequate lubrication, over a range of temperatures.

Multi-viscosity oils (e.g. 10W-30) are a relatively recent invention and result, in a manner wholly unknown to me, from the ability of petroleum chemists to screw around with molecular structures, so that one oil may offer the thin qualities of a low viscosity oil when cold and the thicker qualities of a higher viscosity oil when hot. These oils do not change viscosity as much with changes in temperature. Viscosity index improvers "thicken" oil or increase its "stickiness" at high temperatures without increasing viscosity at low temperatures, and are among the important additives in modern multi-viscosity oils.

Other additives include detergents, oxidation inhibitors, corrosion inhibitors, foaming inhibitors and lubricity (friction-reducing) improvers.

Detergent vs. Non-detergent oils. It is often said that one should not use detergent ("HD") oil in an "old" engine because the action of the detergent additives will loosen up accumulated sludge, pieces of which will then be circulated around, causing damage and clogging oil passages. At one time I believed this myself, and proclaimed it as good antique-car doctrine. Further thought and the study of various authoritative sources have, however, convinced me that it is hokum. Detergents used in motor oils have only very limited ability to clean up deposits of sludge and varnish already formed in an engine. Once formed, these deposits can only be removed mechanically or by the use of powerful cleaning processes (i.e. "hot tanks"). Do not worry about HD oil wrecking an old engine. It won't happen.

The purpose of detergent additives is to prevent deposits of sludge and varnish from accumulating and interfering with the proper operation of the engine. Materials causing sludge and varnish do little or no harm in the oil by themselves, and these



contaminants are held in suspension in HD oil by dispersing agents which inhibit the contaminants tendency to clump together or bake on to engine parts.

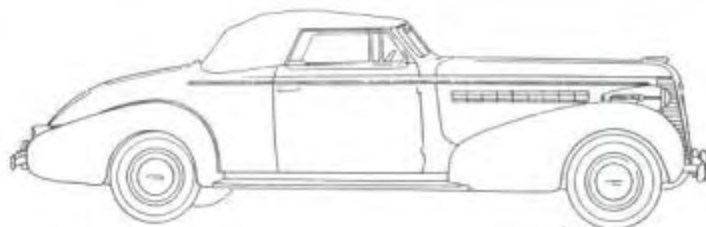
Sludge is formed from a combination of water from condensation, dirt, and products from oil deterioration and incomplete fuel combustion. It can accumulate over time into surprisingly large gooey clumps. Sludge-forming materials are very small when first formed; even the finest oil filters will not trap them. They are much smaller than the thickness of the oil film on moving parts and will not cause wear or damage if they remain small and are well-dispersed. The function of the detergents and dispersing agents in HD oil is to suspend these contaminants in fine enough form in the oil so that they will not settle out on engine parts and can be removed when the oil is drained.

Varnish-forming materials react differently. They combine with oxygen and react with one another, and can be baked by engine heat into a hard coating on the hotter parts of the engine. Compression rings and pistons are particularly sensitive to varnish deposits. Detergent/dispersants are also effective in preventing varnish deposits by dispersing the materials in the oil rather than allowing them to come into contact with one another, and by inhibiting the oxidation process. Separate oxidation-inhibiting additives are also found in modern motor oils.

Modern non-detergent oils are typically performance-graded "SB" — i.e. light-duty. They will perform OK in 1930s engines provided there has been no significant reduction in factory-specified clearances during rebuilding, the engines are not pushed hard, and the oil is changed reasonably often. (In truth, they are probably considerably better than oils sold in the 1930s.) Generally, they have some corrosion inhibitors that stop acid formation, and may have one or more other additives, but, as noted above, they will not prevent sludge and acid formation, and likely are less effective in preventing wear in "boundary lubrication" conditions — i.e. where it is impossible to establish a complete oil film between moving parts.

In some cases, older engines appear to run a little higher oil pressure after initial warm-up with non-detergent oil than they do with the equivalent viscosity-index HD oil. The difference is typically 5-10 psi at cruising RPM. I am not sure why this is, but may theorize that the non-detergent oil thins out a bit less at higher temperatures than the HD oil, even though both may satisfy the modern test requirements for an SAE 30 oil. As indicated in the first part of this article, I do not think a drop-off from 45 to 35 psi as the engine heats up is anything to be concerned about.

There seems to me to be little reason to use non-detergent oil, and considerable reason not to. If you find that you get a little better oil pressure with non-detergent SAE 30, you may well see the same effect if you switch to SAE 40 HD oil. If, however, you feel more comfortable with non-detergent oil, go ahead and use it, but be sure you change it often. Especially if you drive your car infrequently or mostly for short distances, don't go by miles, go by seasons, and change it at least every fall before you put the car away for the winter.





Single vs. Multi-Viscosity Oils. Many people swear that one should never use multi-viscosity oil in an antique car, but I have never heard any convincing reasons advanced to support this position. To say that engines designed and built before multi-viscosity oil was developed should not use that oil is, in my book, about like saying you shouldn't use acrylic laquer: that is, more a question of "style" than sound practice. (Maybe even like saying a 55-year-old person shouldn't take Advil if he gets a headache, which is of course palpable nonsense.) I have always used single-viscosity oil, but I really can't tell you why; probably just because that's what most people do. However, I see no reason why multi-viscosity oil should not be of benefit to engines of older design, as it is to modern engines. One product I have used successfully in somewhat tired modern engines is Valvoline Fleet-Plus 15W-40. This is intended for severe-duty use in gasoline and diesel engines, and is recommended by Caterpillar and GM for truck diesels and earth-moving equipment, but in my experience performs very well in passenger cars. (It cut oil consumption in my son's '79 Pontiac 301 — which left us at 98,000 miles still running strongly — by at least 50%, and gave some increase in pressure even when hot.) Other refiners market a similar product. I intend to try this oil in my '37 come spring, and have recommended it to several members.

"Pennsylvania-grade" oil. There is a chemical difference between so-called "Pennsylvania-grade" oil and other products that are refined from crude petroleum extracted in, say, Texas, but I frankly doubt this makes any significant difference. In any event, although I have not looked at a container of Quaker State lately, I have not seen any identification of products as "Pennsylvania-grade" in a long time. (For example, Kendall, which is headquartered in Pennsylvania, does not say anything about the geographic origin of its motor oils.)

Additives. In some cases, addition of about 10% Marvel Mystery Oil to crankcase oil (i.e. one pint per five-quart capacity) will free up stuck hydraulic lifters — but of course (other than a few "upgrades") we don't have hydraulic lifters. I have considerable skepticism concerning all oil additives, and my advice generally is: save your money.

\* \* \* \* \*

In the end, I think questions about what oil to use come down largely to personal preference tempered by some intelligent experimentation. Plainly, one should not use straight 10W in hot weather; it will start to burn off quickly and may not provide adequate lubrication. Likewise, at temperatures close to freezing single-viscosity 40 or 50 is not a good idea: the engine will be hard to turn over, and you will not have adequate lubrication until it is well warmed up. (If you have looked at a connecting rod, for example, you will know that oil must be forced out of a very small hole as a spray to lubricate the cam lobes. If it just oozes out the hole, it will do no good at all.) I would not recommend single-viscosity 50 even in hot weather unless your engine is thoroughly broken in, which most rebuilt engines in antique cars are not. Between those extremes there is room for considerable variation. Armed with the elementary but nevertheless useful knowledge gained from reading this article, try a few different products and see whether there seems to be any difference. No oil produced by a reputable nationally-known refiner is bad; at the same time, none can compensate more than marginally for serious mechanical impairments. If one product seems to provide a bit more pressure at cruising speed, stick with it. If you simply feel more comfortable with one grade or brand, even if you can't come up with an objectively-sound reason, that is probably fine, but do not be afraid to try something new. Multi-viscosity HD oils have advantages that should not be dismissed out of hand.

The most important principle of motor oil use is this: change it often. Even at \$2.00 a quart, oil is cheap; it would be cheap at \$10 compared to \$3000-plus for a new engine. In particular, don't leave the old oil in your engine when you put a car away for the winter, no matter how few miles are on that oil.

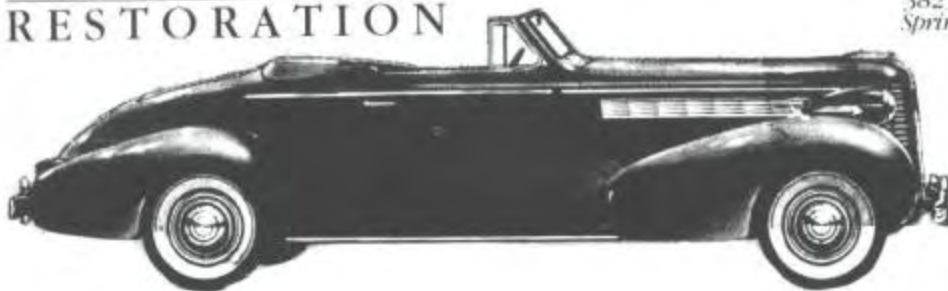
### CLASSIFIED ADS

Occasionally people send me money with a classified ad. This is just a reminder that money is not necessary, although it is always cheerfully received. Here are the basic rules for classified ads.

1. Ads are free provided they are of reasonable length. What is "reasonable length"? I'm not sure, but I have never received an ad that was unreasonably long.
2. One photo will be run with a "Car for Sale" ad provided space is available; that is to say, if I have to add a whole page to accommodate the photo, I probably will leave it out.
3. Ads will be run three times in succession provided you tell me you want that. If you don't, the ad will be run once. More than three times and you are conclusively presumed to be (a) a non-casual (i.e. "business") seller and you have to pay or (b) a seeker of things that don't exist.
4. All ads must relate to '37 or '38 Buick cars, parts thereof, or parts reasonably adaptable thereto (e.g. later-year engine parts). If you want to sell a '59 Eldorado, or your cousin's Toyota, seek elsewhere — I will ignore you.
5. If your handwriting stinks, please print legibly or type it. You may not think your handwriting stinks, but if I can't read it, I may just mail it back with a request for translation — if I am in a benevolent mood. If I am not in a benevolent mood — and believe me there are such occasions — I may just drop it in File 13. I may also edit ads for clarity, or to delete Impertinent or Scandalous Matter.

If you want to run a "display ad" (i.e. a big thing with pictures, etc.) you will have to pay. Contact the Editor to find out how much.

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# Classified Ads



## PARTS FOR SALE

No one sent in one single parts for sale ad this time, so I will remind '37 40-series owners that I have a bunch of odd stuff lying around, and that if I have something you need, I might even give it to you. Call or write the Editor.

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1938 model 41 trunk-back sedan: lots of good parts for sale. Call or write TED MASILIAN (#883). 1818 Four Mile Rd., Racine, WI 53402 414/639-8066.

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1937 model 80-C four-door convertible: body (rough), top, chassis-\$2800; '37 Roadmaster sedan, rolling, incomplete-\$1325; '37 80-series dual sidemounts complete-\$950; nice rear fenders-\$250 both. DAVE POWERS(#894). 27732 Paseo Barona, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675-2850. 714/493-1199. (5)

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## PARTS WANTED

1938 radio, complete. ALEX WISLOW (#844). 200 South Prospect, Park Ridge, IL 60068. 708/825-8000.

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1938 90 series-accelerator linkage; windshield center stainless; nose stainless molding; Limited badge for hood; engine splash pan right side; carburetor; running board moldings. J.W.PASCOE (#881). 2136 24th Ave. S., Escanaba, MI 49829.

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1938 grille, both halves, in restorable condition. GENE EVANS (#877). 502 Central Ave., Fillmore, CA 93015. 805/524-1313.

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## CARS FOR SALE

1937 Special convertible sedan, model 40-C. Sidemounts. First year all-steel Body by Fisher. Body-off restoration; new paint, wires, top. Engine overhauled & runs great. 6 new WSW tires. Radio, map light, electric clock, cigar lighter, heater, Senior Trippe lamps, sharktooth grille guard. Can be driven anywhere. Many trophies go with car. Call for price, after 6 PM (EST) M-F, 718/847-5869. SALVATORE BIAGINI (#566).



Golden Motors in San Antonio, Texas has a '37 40-series sedan in decent running condition with sidemounts. The proprietor says he will take \$3300 for it as is, which sounds reasonable enough. Call 512/647-5555.

## CARS WANTED

1938 or later convertible Century or Roadmaster, needing restoration or presentable driver. Special also considered. J.W.PASCOE (#881). 2136 24th Ave. S., Escanaba, MI 49829.

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## NEW MEMBERS

Leif Lundin (<sup>833</sup>#932)  
Arnhoege Gård  
S-27052 Borrbý  
SWEDEN  
0414-30250  
'37 47 '37 60-C

Jerome M. Myers (<sup>4</sup>#933)  
2842 Subtle Lane  
Fairfax, VA 22031  
703/573-6850  
'37 46

David W. Merritt (<sup>5</sup>#934)  
250 East- 700 South  
Lebanon, IN 46052  
317/482-2348  
'37 40 (2)

Thomas Abraham (#777)  
P.O.Box 5979  
Kuwait City  
KUWAIT  
011-965-246-5465  
'38 90-L

Johnny Wegeman (<sup>6</sup>#935)  
231 White Oak Circle  
Maitland, FL 32751  
407/645-5334

To correct a mistake in the assignment of membership numbers, the following new members have received new numbers, as follows: Sparrer - 931; Wilson - 932; Lundin - 933; Myers - 934; Merritt - 935; Wegeman - 936. The numbers really do not mean much, but all clubs seem to have them, so we do too. They do indicate roughly how long a person has been a member. We hit 500 around 1985. If a person drops out, his number is not re-used; however, if he comes back in later, as sometimes happens, he gets his old number back, if we can determine what it was.



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### DOOR BOTTOM SEAL

CLIP TYPE.....DW-369.....\$1.80ft

### TRUNK SEAL-SEDANS, 1/2" WIDE

SER. 80-90.....TW-371.....\$29.50  
SEDANS, 3/4" WIDE.  
SER. 40-60.....TW-371S.....\$29.50.

### TRUNK SEAL-COUPES, 9/16" X 1" SPONGE

.....TL-369.....\$2.00ft.

### CLUTCH and BRAKE PEDALS SERIES 40-60

BLACK.....CB-343BK.....\$5.00EA.  
BROWN.....CB-343BN.....\$5.00EA.  
SERIES 80-90.....CB-32BK.....\$7.50EA.  
BROWN.....CB-32BN.....\$8.50EA.

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### 1937 ONLY! ACCELERATOR PEDALS SERIES

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BROWN.....AP-37BN.....\$29.00

### SHIFT BOOT, 1937-38 SERIES 40 ONLY!

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BROWN.....SB-348BN.....\$9.75

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SERIES 60-80-90..FK-116.....\$30.00.

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STROMBERG.....CK-37XS \$26.00

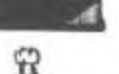
### VALVES & LIFTERS SERIES 40-50;

INTAKE.....V-944.....\$11.EA.  
EXHAUST.....VS-837.....\$11.EA.  
LIFTERS.....VL-1M.....\$9.EA.

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### VISOR\*VANITY\*MIRROR. VM-369.....\$25.00



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.....RADIO.....RG-37.....\$23.

.....CLOCK.....CG-37.....\$28.

1938.....SPEEDO DG-38.....\$38.

.....RADIO.....RG-38.....\$23.

.....CLOCK.....CG-38.....\$28.

PLASTIC DASH KNOBS DK-37(38).....\$6.

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1937 HUB CAPS. ALL SER..HC-37.....\$60.EA.

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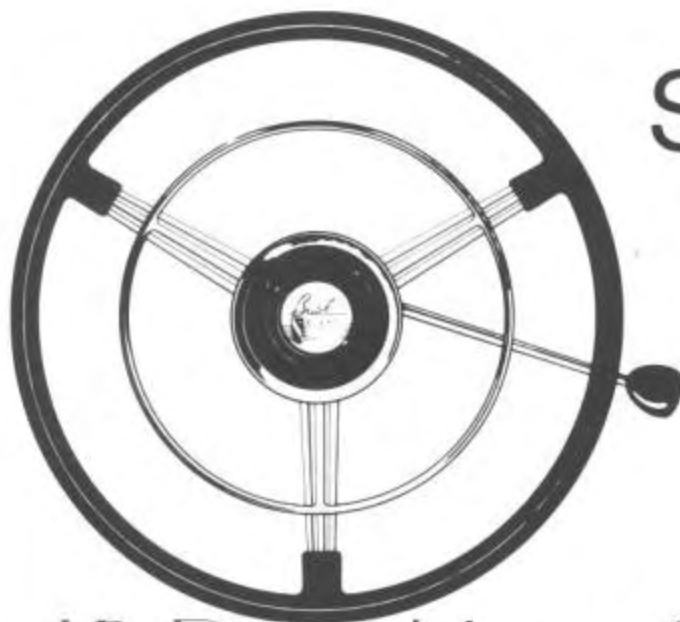
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